

The Church, When The Boys Come Home

In order that the men as they return to their home communities may be met in the right spirit and welcomed into the fellowship of the churches, it is urged that every church form a Church Welcome Committee whose business will be to welcome properly the men whose stars appear on the service flag which the church has taken so much pride in displaying during the war. The time is certainly at hand when the Church should make *substantial and practical* recognition of the service rendered by her men. This recognition cannot be made in any better way or one that will be more appreciated than by personal, intimate man to man relationship.



Opportunities for the Church Welcome Committee

The Home-Coming Man and His Family

Secure the correct home address of every man of the church who has been in the service. (Note—"Man," as construed in this plan, means each returned man or woman.)

Send a letter to each family, advising of the formation of this Committee, its personnel, etc.

Call on all of these families, assuring them that the church wishes to extend a warm welcome to the home-coming men and to minister to them. Sometimes it may be necessary to appoint sponsors for men without parents. (Many men are going to return to sadly changed homes.)

Study the material, mental and spiritual needs of the homes. Be prepared wisely to help meet these needs.

Get the family to advise you as each man returns. Send him a letter immediately, advising that you stand ready to serve him. Then call and give the same message in person.

In visiting the homes of returning men who are not members of the church, the Committee should endeavor to lead them to the Pastor for instruction.

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The Man and His Job

Every man on his return should be interviewed by some of the active business men and given counsel and advice so that he may be fitted into the place best suited to his abilities.

Many returning men will have become keen for more educational advantages. Many of them through wounds or training they have received will not return to the work in which they were engaged before the war. These men should be served and directed. (See Addenda.)

Interview the business men of the parish and community, asking them to advise you of positions that may be open or that may later be open, and give this information to the U. S. Employment Bureau.

Get correct information as to Government rules, regulations and privileges as to Insurance, Allotments, Compensations, Vocational Education, etc., that you may be prepared to give wise counsel and advice. (See Addenda for addresses where this information may be obtained.)

Find out from local and Federal agencies the opportunities for employment of the men and co-operate actively with such agencies. (See Addenda.)

The Man and His Social Life

Study all the phases of reconstruction and other work and entertainment planned in the community for the returning men, particularly through such established agencies as War Camp Community Service, Red Cross, Y. M. C. A., Y. W. C. A., K. of C., Jewish Welfare Board, Rotary Club, Chambers of Commerce, etc., etc.

Get invitations to meals in the homes of members of the church, arranging, if possible, that one of those men back longest, and on the committee, be invited to the same house at the same time.

Arrange a social function for all the men returned, consulting with them as to the form this should assume which will be most pleasing to them.

At the close of the first social meeting the men who have been welcomed should be told that they now were members of the Welcome Committee and the committee expects them to help plan a better welcome for those who have not returned than they have received themselves.

Meetings of the committee should be regular, not less frequent than twice each month, when views should be exchanged, fellowship developed and the practical problems of right living and the development of the church's influence in the community should be discussed.

If these meetings are held at regular intervals throughout the entire demobilization period, a church morale will be built up among the laymen that will carry over and result in an increase in the spiritual life of the church and community.

It would be well, in the interests of church unity, if co-operation was effected with all religious organizations possible, so as to provide a stated periodical joint welcome which shall compare favorably with anything planned in the community, avoiding duplication of effort.

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The Man and His Church

Plan for a wider and larger work of the church to provide real work for every man according to his ability and opportunity.

See that the returning man is asked by the different church organizations to come to meetings and is asked to take a part in the church's work.

Have in mind wherever possible that the man returning shall come with his family to church service to return thanks and to reconsecrate his life to God.

The committee should see that seats are always ready for assignment to returned men and their families, especially where pews are rented and the family has no regular sittings. The committee should always have some members either as ushers or as a special committee at the door of the church to welcome these men.

Arrange for memorial service to the men who have died in Service and send urgent invitations to every man returned to be present as a tribute to the memory of his deceased comrades.

Later on, after the men are all back, it might be well to plan a service of thanksgiving, or a memorial service, when tablets or other memorials may be unveiled, appropriate addresses made, etc.

The returned men should be urged to look up and invite all of their unchurched comrades in the community to join with them and they should be welcomed and included in the same manner as those whose names appear on the Honor Roll of the church.

Many men, perhaps not members, consider your church their church home. Seek them out in your community and add them to your Roll.

Churches near camps, posts, stations and hospitals of the Regular Army or of the Navy, should plan for work among the men.

To each of the church boys still in camps, hospitals or overseas, a letter should be sent, telling of the organization of this Committee, etc.

Interlock. Don't Duplicate

The committee should not duplicate work of secular organizations or compete with them. Rather should it co-operate with them, supplying strength and leadership. The committee should also co-operate with and secure the assistance of all the women and church organizations and agencies in developing its plan, as well as with bureaus formed by or through the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America, 105 East Twenty-Second Street, New York City.

Meet Regularly and Continuously

Church Welcome Committees are particularly cautioned not to permit their welcome to the men to take the form of large, sporadic and occasional, social meetings. Social meetings are advisable and have their place, but they should be intimate and informal rather than distant and impersonal.

In order to make this plan succeed, it will be necessary to recognize and adhere to these important features.

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First, meetings should be regular and of three distinct types:

- (1) Business Meetings, where the material, social and spiritual welfare of the returned men and their families should be discussed and their needs satisfied.
- (2) Social Meetings, when all the men returned up to time of holding social function should be welcomed in a very personal way. At this meeting all the men so welcomed are urged to bring in their comrades who are not identified with any other church.
- (3) Forum Meetings. It is important that the returned men should be given an opportunity to talk and to discuss the problems that are facing the church and their community.

In Conclusion

Finally see that every man and his family, without distinction as to military service or social relationship, are welcomed in a very personal way and made to feel that the church wants them and needs them and that they need the church.

Addenda

Write to General War-Time Commission of the Churches (a Commission of the Federal Council of the Churches of Christ in America), 937 Woodward Building, Washington, D. C., for constructive suggestions and literature.

Also write for "Study Outline in the Problems of the Reconstruction Period," revised edition, Association Press, 347 Madison Ave., New York City: Also for "A Bibliography of Social Service" by F. Ernest Johnson and "What Every Church Should Know About its Community" by Harry F. Ward, et al. These are published by the Commission on the Church and Social Service of the Federal Council, 105 East Twenty-Second Street, New York City.

For information re: Insurance, Allotments, etc., write to:
Bureau of War Risk Insurance, Treasury Department, Washington, D. C.

For information re: Vocational Education, write to:
Federal Board for Vocational Education, Washington, D. C.

For information re: Employment, write to:
U. S. Employment Service, Dept. of Labor, Washington, D. C. Write for Bulletin containing directory.

Your Home Service Section of the Red Cross has compiled most of this information.

GENERAL WAR-TIME COMMISSION OF THE CHURCHES

105 East 22d Street, New York City

Washington Office at
937 Woodward Building, Washington, D. C.